

Court File No.: CV-12-455575

ONTARIO
SUPERIOR COURT OF JUSTICE

BETWEEN:

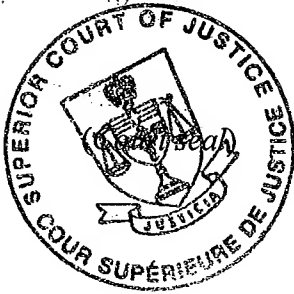
EDWIN MELLEN PRESS LIMITED

Plaintiff

and

DALE ASKEY and McMASTER UNIVERSITY

Defendants



NOTICE OF ACTION

TO THE DEFENDANTS

A LEGAL PROCEEDING HAS BEEN COMMENCED AGAINST YOU by the plaintiff. The claim made against you is set out in the statement of claim served with this notice of action.

IF YOU WISH TO DEFEND THIS PROCEEDING, you or an Ontario lawyer acting for you must prepare a statement of defence in Form 18A prescribed by the Rules of Civil Procedure, serve it on the plaintiff's lawyer or, where the plaintiff does not have a lawyer, serve it on the plaintiff, and file it, with proof of service, in this court office, WITHIN TWENTY DAYS after this notice of action is served on you, if you are served in Ontario.

If you are served in another province or territory of Canada or in the United States of America, the period for serving and filing your statement of defence is forty days. If you are served outside Canada and the United States of America, the period is sixty days.

Instead of serving and filing a statement of defence, you may serve and file a notice of intent to defend in Form 18B prescribed by the Rules of Civil Procedure. This will entitle you to ten more days within which to serve and file your statement of defence.

IF YOU FAIL TO DEFEND THIS PROCEEDING, JUDGMENT MAY BE GIVEN AGAINST YOU IN YOUR ABSENCE AND WITHOUT FURTHER NOTICE TO YOU. IF

YOU WISH TO DEFEND THIS PROCEEDING BUT ARE UNABLE TO PAY LEGAL FEES,
LEGAL AID MAY BE AVAILABLE TO YOU BY CONTACTING A LOCAL LEGAL AID
OFFICE.

(Where the claim made is for money only, include the following:)

IF YOU PAY THE PLAINTIFF'S CLAIM, and \$ 500 for costs, within the time for
serving and filing your statement of defence, you may move to have this proceeding dismissed
by the court. If you believe the amount claimed for costs is excessive, you may pay the plaintiff's
claim and \$400.00 for costs and have the costs assessed by the court.

Date: **JUN 7 2012**

Issued by



Local Registrar

Address of court office:

~~361 University Avenue,~~

~~Toronto, ON,~~

~~M5G 1T3~~

TO Dale Askey
Associate University Librarian
c/o Library & Learning Technologies
Mills, L 305/A
McMaster University
1280 Main Street West
Hamilton, ON
L8S 4L8.

SUPERIOR COURT
OF JUSTICE
393 UNIVERSITY AVE.
10TH FLOOR
TORONTO, ONTARIO
M5G 1E6

COUR SUPÉRIEURE
DE JUSTICE
393 AVE. UNIVERSITY
10E ÉTAGE
TORONTO, ONTARIO
M5G 1E6

AND

TO: McMaster University
1280 Main Street West
Hamilton, ON
L8S 4L8.

CLAIM

The plaintiff claims \$3.0 million dollars as damages for defamation arising from continuous publication on the world wide web by the defendant Askey. McMaster University is vicariously liable for the statements published by the defendant Askey.

Date: June 7, 2012

BORDEN LADNER GERVAIS LLP

Barristers and Solicitors

Scotia Plaza

40 King Street West

Toronto, ON M5H 3Y4

Robert B. Bell, Esq.

(LSUC #20145G)

Tel: (416) 367-6160

Fax: (416) 361-2757

Lawyers for the Plaintiff

EDWIN MELLEN PRESS LIMITED

-and-

ASKEY and McMASTER UNIVERSITY

**ONTARIO
SUPERIOR COURT OF JUSTICE
PROCEEDINGS COMMENCED AT**

TORONTO

NOTICE OF ACTION

BORDEN LADNER GERVASIS LLP

Barristers and Solicitors

Scotia Plaza

**40 King Street West
Toronto, Ontario**

M5H 3Y4

ROBERT B. BELL

Tel: (416) 367-6160

Fax: (416) 361-2757

(LSUC #20145G)

Lawyers for the Plaintiff

**ONTARIO
SUPERIOR COURT OF JUSTICE**

BETWEEN:

**THE EDWIN MELLEN PRESS LIMITED and
PSR PRESS LTD. c.o.b. as THE EDWIN MELLEN PRESS LIMITED**

Plaintiffs

and

DALE ASKEY and McMASTER UNIVERSITY

Defendants

STATEMENT OF CLAIM

Notice of action issued on June 7, 2012

1. The plaintiffs claim :
 - a) damages in the amount of \$3 million for libel;
 - b) aggravated and exemplary damages of \$500,000.00
 - c) costs of the action on a substantial indemnity basis;
 - d) pre-judgment interest in accordance with the *Courts of Justice Act*; and
 - e) such further and other relief as this Honourable deems just.
2. The plaintiff, Edwin Mellen Press Limited is a company registered in England and Wales. PSR Press Ltd. is incorporated in New York State. It markets and sells books published under the imprint of The Edwin Mellen Press. The corporations will be referred to herein as The Press. The Press is a significant and well established publisher and distributor of academic books and journals.

3. The defendant, Dale Askey ("Askey") is Associate University Librarian, Library and Learning Technologies and is employed by the defendant, McMaster University.
4. From September, 2010 through to March, 2012 the defendants posted on the world wide web "The Curious Case of Edwin Mellen Press" together with statements made by others for which the defendants are liable.
5. The defamatory words from "The Curious Case of Edwin Mellen Press" are underlined and together with the entire posting on the world wide web are attached as Schedule "A" to the statement of claim herein. The defendants accuse The Press of accepting second class authors whereas The Press has published many leading scholars and its editors include many from high ranking universities. The defendants urge university libraries not to buy The Press' titles because they are of poor quality and poor scholarship. The defendants' statements are false.
6. The plaintiffs plead that the entire posting is defamatory in its tone and context.
7. The said words are false and defamatory of The Press and meant and were understood to mean:
 - (a) It is a "vanity press" not scholarly and operated like "Lulu" a self-publishing operation which has no academic credibility.
 - (b) That publications are at "egregiously high prices", putting the cost as U.S. \$149.95 whereas the average list price for 2010-2011 was \$109.95.
 - (c) That the business model followed by The Press relies upon in effect librarians not doing their job and failing to return books supplied on approval. In fact, most of The Press' books are sold as individual special order and not through approval plans. Further, there is no "golden goose" in that The Press' discounts to library suppliers are less than the competitors' discounts. The suppliers do not have financial incentives to encourage purchases of The Press' books over the competition.
 - (d) That The Press has "few, if any, noted scholars serving as series editors." In fact, The Press stopped publishing books in series in 2005. All books published by The Press are edited by reputable scholars in the subject area. Sponsoring editors are listed in the books, which the defendants would know had they read them. Books are peer reviewed by competent scholars in the subject area.

- (e) That The Press does not pay successful authors any royalties. In fact, many of The Press' authors receive royalties or the equivalent.
- (f) That The Press engages in "the noxious practice" of demanding that authors assign their copyright. In fact, The Press does not ask or require authors to give up copyright to their books.
- (g) That the books have poor quality bindings; the covers are "cheap cloth" and the book blocks are skewed and not square. In fact, The Press produces full sewn bindings which are not glued; they are bound in custom cloth designed for The Press by Xerox Corporation, now sold as "MELLEN WHITE 30388 54"; and the book blocks are square because The Press' machine cannot accept pages which are skewed. The Press does not use outside printing companies but rather its own purpose built book printing and binding machinery.
- (h) That the books are not edited and camera ready pages are an indicator of how shoddy the publications are. In fact, authors providing final copy properly formatted is in accordance with standard industry practice. The publications are edited and the books are of good quality.
- (i) That authors are "enslaved" to a contract. In fact, authors have every opportunity to review contract wording before agreeing to publication by The Press.

8. Prestigious universities, which on any estimation would rank higher than McMaster, have purchased titles from The Press, for example :

University of Toronto	3,940 titles
Yale	3,305 titles
Harvard	4,731 titles
Oxford	2,621 titles

9. The defendants state that between 2005-2010 Yale University acquired 582 Mellen titles without "careful consideration" because they were supplied by booksellers "on approval" and Yale's librarians did not make their own considered judgments about the quality of these books. In fact, the plaintiffs plead that Yale closely examined and specifically approved purchases and returned those which were not approved. The Press invited Yale to re-examine its purchases. The Press offered a full refund plus 20% for any titles

which Yale discovered mistakenly slipped through its original review process. Yale has not returned any of The Press' books.

10. The plaintiffs have been greatly injured in their professional and corporate reputations and have been the victim of a malicious attack by the defendants.
11. The plaintiffs plead that the defendants were actuated by malice in posting the defamatory statements on the world wide web. The plaintiffs rely not only on the malice implied by the publication itself as aforesaid but also having regard for the defendants' failure to remove the posting even though they knew it was defamatory; their refusal to apologize and remove the posting upon receiving notice of the libel; and the fact that they pursued an internet campaign to put The Press out of business. Further, the defendant McMaster University wrongfully disavowed any responsibility for Askey and threatened to sue The Press, its shareholder Ruth Koheil and its editor, Herbert Richardson.
12. McMaster University adopted the defamatory statements as their own by permitting Askey to continue the publications and refusing to intervene to require Askey to remove the defamatory statements from the world wide web.
13. The plaintiffs plead that McMaster University is Dale Askey's employer and is vicariously responsible for the defamatory publications as aforesaid.
14. By reason of the foregoing, the plaintiffs claim aggravated and exemplary damages.

15. The plaintiffs propose that this action be tried in the City of Toronto.

Date: July 4, 2012

BORDEN LADNER GERVAIS LLP

Barristers and Solicitors
Scotia Plaza
40 King Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 3Y4

Robert B. Bell, Esq.
(LSUC #20145G)
Tel: (416) 367-6160
Fax: (416) 361-2757

Lawyers for the Plaintiffs

TO Dale Askey
Associate University Librarian
c/o Library & Learning Technologies
Mills, L 305/A
McMaster University
1280 Main Street West
Hamilton, ON
L8S 4L8

AND

TO: McMaster University
1280 Main Street West
Gilmour Hall Rm. 238
Hamilton, ON
L8S 4L8.
Attn: Patrick Deane
President & Vice-Chancellor

[Skip to content](#)

On Libraries and Media

- [Home](#)
- [About](#)
- [Why Eintauchen?](#)

The curious case of Edwin Mellen Press

September 22, 2010

tags: [publishers](#), [publishing](#), [vanity presses](#)
by Dale

Edwin Mellen Press has been on my radar as a dubious publisher for over a decade now, and given that libraries' monographic budgets are ever-shrinking, I find myself amazed by the durability of Mellen.

When I worked at the University of Utah, I made a snarky comment about Mellen on a mailing list which landed in the inbox of Mellen's publisher. We got into a testy email exchange, in the course of which he accused me of academic mobbing. Given that I came to my own conclusions about Mellen, and that one can easily look at their catalog and figure out the same conclusions, it was a curious accusation. Of course, I had publicly called them a junk publisher, so namecalling was certainly in play.

Yes, they occasionally publish a worthy title. No, they are not technically a vanity publisher, since apparently they earn enough from libraries with their egregiously high prices to avoid asking for subsidies from authors. But at the end of the day, so much of what they publish is simply second-class scholarship (and that is being kind in some cases), and in a time when libraries cannot purchase so much of the first-class scholarship, there is simply no reason to support such ventures. We in libraries are especially placed in a bind when our own faculty place books with such publishers. We buy them with gritted teeth and wish faculty would consult us on publisher choice, an area where many librarians have extensive knowledge.

On a whim, I did a quick study of my previous employers to see how many titles they purchased from Mellen from 2005-2010. The results are striking:

- 22 titles: University of Utah
- 582 titles: Yale University

- 149 titles: Kansas State University

If one takes the ballpark figure of \$100 per title (yes, their prices, for a largely humanities publisher, are on the high side), these title counts represent substantial expenditures. I was pleased to see the low figure at Utah, where several of us persuaded our colleagues years ago to banish Mellen from our approval plan; apparently that tradition has been continued.

Were we living in an age of rapidly rising monographic budgets, we could stomach, perhaps, spending some of our money on marginal scholarship. But we are not living in those times, and every academic library is progressively tightening the screws on approval plans, to the point where we reject some of the output from publishers with the proper bona fides. Making wise choices about our purchases will do as much to help shape the future of scholarly communication as does all of our lobbying and advocacy, yet we often neglect the former and emphasize the latter.

Such publishers often point to their titles sitting on the shelves of major libraries, such as Yale, as evidence of their worthiness. The dirty little secret of libraries is that such purchases are rarely evidence of careful consideration, but rather a sign of how much of the work of acquisitions we outsource to vendors, who supply these books on approval. Why? Well, since those suppliers take a cut of sales, it is in their interest to sell as many high-priced volumes as possible, and in that scenario, a publisher such as Mellen is a golden goose. As libraries further reduce the number of qualified subject librarians (underway nearly everywhere, even at the elites), this trend will only get worse.

Given how closely Mellen guards its reputation against all critics, perhaps I should just put on my flameproof suit now.

Share this: [Email](#) 2 [Facebook](#) [Digg](#) [StumbleUpon](#) [Reddit](#)

from → [Stuff](#)

← [Librarians leading libraries](#)

[Moving on →](#)

Be the first to like this post.

40 Comments



1. [Andry's Onsman permalink](#)
October 25, 2010 07:51

Dear Dale, I write as someone who has published two books with EMP so far. I wonder why you would dismiss (nearly) an entire set of publications with the tag of second-class? I certainly do not believe that either of my books are that – but of course you are welcome to check their quality yourself. It's easily done via google, Amazon or EMP's own site. Perhaps, if you are indeed concerned with quality of scholarship and are not merely carrying a grudge, you might then recommend that your library buys a copy, preferably of both. Before publication, both of my books were read and recommended by experts in the field, all of whom were happy enough to have their names associated with the texts. Further, both were read by readers from EMP, neither of who are known to me. Surely that constitutes a reasonable refereeing process? I have

no particular interest in EMP apart from their willingness to allow my books to be judged by those whose opinions I consider to be worthwhile and their willingness to publish physically well made books. On the other hand, I would say that few if any publishers do not publish a number of books that I would not buy. I am not convinced that my opinion or taste makes them second rate. Finally, it is interesting that you acknowledge that EMP does have a reputation to protect – perhaps from unsubstantiated attack? Nonetheless, best wishes, Andrys Onsman.



2.

Dale permalink*

October 25, 2010 22:36

I am hardly alone in my criticism of EMP, Andrys. What saddens me is that you placed what you consider (and I will trust your judgment here) to be solid works of scholarship with a press with such a dubious reputation. As one person put it in a recent Chronicle of Higher Education discussion of EMP, even a broken clock is right twice a day. True enough, but the clock is still broken.

What EMP exploits, and this is the heart of my criticism I think, is that there is, sadly, a market for even the sketchiest academic titles. This is because the vast majority of academic libraries could never afford—even in the best of financial times—enough subject experts who could assess the books on offer and buy accordingly. Library budgets are finite, of course, so dollars spent on EMP titles (and they are hardly alone on the lower end of the publishing scale) are dollars not spent on more worthwhile titles.

A valid retort from an EMP supporter, and one I have often heard, is that libraries cannot blame publishers for bad books if they buy them blindly. True enough, and it galls me how little time most academic libraries spend on specifying with their suppliers how they rank or rate publishers. That is our problem, one that a number of librarians are aware of and are doing something about, as in my case.

The fact is, however, that libraries have to be able to trust presses to turn out good titles, or our work becomes impossible given the sheer global output of scholarship. With Mellen, that trust is violated time and again. I did not learn to distrust Mellen by reading about them, but by inspecting the titles that were arriving in the library where I worked at the time. Some were OK, as you note, but the overwhelming majority were poorly produced yet overpriced works. I investigated who was publishing and where they stood in their fields. The fact was that most were (and are) outsiders, who lack the credentials to get in with one of the trusted publishers who, yes, occasionally put out a dud title, but these remain a small minority of their output. Also, it bears noting that EMP has few, if any, noted scholars serving as series editors. The evidence just all adds up.



Andrys Onsman permalink

October 28, 2010 01:48

That's funny, Andrys. Most people can't even tell what I'm doing in that photo. I am a devotee of and two-time participant in the Alternatieve Elfstedentocht in Weissensee and a marathon skater in the Dutch/Frisian mold in general.

■
Merv Rowlinson [permalink](#)
November 1, 2010 13:48

Dear Dale:

Having recently had a book published with these guys I am somewhat alarmed by the issues you have raised


In addition to the the academic quality issue, I am a little concerned that students in my academic field may not be able to purchase at a reasonable price. In fact it seems the work is already out of print (less than 6 months) after publishing.

In the words of Marvin Gaye I am beginning to ask: "What's going on"?

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Merv Rowlinson
Southampton, Copenhagen & Hamburg.

4.


Dale [permalink*](#)
November 1, 2010 15:45

You are right to ask these questions, Merv. The list price for your book is \$149.95, which prices it well beyond the means of any student. All EMP titles, for that matter, are priced as such, and I have never seen a paperback student edition of one of their titles. Sorry you had to encounter this after publishing with them.

What would be interesting to know from EMP authors is whether or not they make any money (royalties) on their sales. If so, at least the high prices pay a dividend to the scholar. If not, which is what I suspect, one wonders what the bottom line at EMP looks like.

I think most scholarly authors are just so happy to find a willing publisher that they do not ask these kinds of questions before publishing. As husband to a publishing scholar, I can empathize, but it does lead to all sorts of post-publication blues. My hope is that those scholars who have established themselves, and thus have greater freedom to choose when, how, and where they publish, will exercise their right to publish in sustainable and reasonable ways. If that takes hold, then perhaps we will arrive at the day where junior scholars' work can be assessed differently, more in line with its quality and impact than whether it got put on paper and sandwiched between boards by some publisher, any publisher.

5.

Stephen Roberts [permalink](#)
November 12, 2010 20:08

My first book was published by EMP in 1993. I am very proud of that book. It sold 200 copies, received good reviews & has since been regularly cited in all the relevant literature. I have a new book just out from EMP. I also know that I have worked hard to make this a good piece of scholarship. Admittedly some of the books I have seen advertised by EMP would probably be better presented to the world as articles in scholarly journals, but the two books of theirs that I have bought – a biography of W.H. Ainsworth & a study of anti-Catholicism in Victorian Britain – have both been excellent. I did not receive any royalties from EMP but apparently even some prestigious scholarly publishers are no longer paying royalties on monographs. Individual scholars can buy books published by EMP at a reduced rate which is comparable to the price you would pay for scholarly books published in hardback by other publishers. And the books are extremely well produced.



Dale [permalink](#)*
November 12, 2010 20:42

Picking up on one point you made, I would dispute that these books are well made. As a librarian, I have handled many EMP titles (more than I care to admit). The reason the press first caught my eye—as I noted, I came to my own conclusions about EMP and was not swayed by the prevailing discourse—was the poor quality of the bindings: cheap cloth, and book blocks that were not square, but skewed. Inside, I discovered that they were using what appeared to be camera-ready copy submitted by authors, and were not applying professional layout and copyediting to the texts. This is what a self-published book from Lulu looks like, and a librarian can spot such books at a glance. For the prices EMP demands, I expect flawless books, which is what one nearly always receives from presses with better reputations.

I realize I have put up a lightning rod here for every EMP author, who will feel compelled to defend their books. It would be wrong, and impossible, for me to pronounce judgment on the scholarship in detail. My core criticisms, however, are that the titles are nearly always too narrow in scope/too marginal (as you said, journal articles would make sense here), the texts are not professionally edited, the physical quality is suspect, and the prices are too high. As I noted earlier, it is in libraries' hands not to pay these prices, and as monograph budgets get tighter and tighter, more presses are going to be hard pressed to sell books. Those that live solely by selling to libraries, as EMP surely does with their price point, will feel the pinch. There are better and more sustainable models for publishing and distributing niche scholarship, and these will inevitably come to the fore as libraries lose the ability to keep this market afloat.

6.

Stephen Roberts [permalink](#)
November 13, 2010 12:15

Undoubtedly you have encountered more books published by EMP than I have, Dale. I can only say that my own book from 1993 has proved to be pretty sturdy – unlike subsequent books I have brought out with other more ‘respectable’ publishers where pages have soon become detached or turned brown.

EMP present themselves as a specialist publisher in the humanities, though some of the titles they advertise do look ultra-specialist & perhaps better suited to be being written up as articles for scholarly journals. However, I am far from sure that a study of novelist who was very popular in his day but is now almost entirely forgotten would have found a ‘mainstream’ academic publisher. So I am glad EMP were there to bring it out; it is a most interesting book.

Several of my colleagues have told me that they have been asked by publishers to make financial contributions towards the cost of bringing out their books. With EMP all that is asked for is camera-ready copy. And they do advertise – my new book has been advertised in both the TLS & the IRB. My only real gripe with EMP is that they provide authors with only two complimentary copies of their books; it really should be more.

This is an interesting discussion: thanks for starting it.



Dale [permalink*](#)
November 19, 2010 17:24

That they require camera-ready copy is for me something of a warning sign, since it means that they are not taking the steps of careful copyediting and proofing. This shows in the final product. Authors who are punctilious editors and excellent writers will produce books of quality, but many academic authors need the benefit of professional editing.

For niche scholarship, I for one would be pleased if we saw more development in the realm of open access monograph publishing. It would be beneficial for the disciplines for this research to see the light of day, but the old model – put it on paper and sell it to libraries – simply is no longer sustainable. What makes open access monograph publishing so hard compared to open access journal publishing is that for the former one needs those professional editors to create readable products, while the latter’s quality can be assured by the well-known back and forth of double blind peer review and successive rounds of corrections demanded by journal editors.



7.

Esther [permalink](#)
November 17, 2010 19:57

Dear Dale, As a scholar who published with EMP, I can attest to their dubious reputation: My book appears in many libraries worldwide, but most of my colleagues ignored it

(unfortunately). At the time, I published with them because they offered speedy publication. Other presses could not promise me a span of a few months.

In any case, I'd like to warn other scholars about other issues:

1. Their copyright agreement is the worst I've seen in the industry. They literally and practically enslave their authors to a contract that NO ONE should ever sign.
2. They never pay royalties.

Self-publishing an e-book, in my opinion, is better than going with EMP.



Dale [permalink*](#)

November 19, 2010 17:26

As I said in my comment above, I agree with you about self-publishing, although I would go the step further and say that scholars and librarians should create open access monograph imprints along the lines of the open access journal presses already in existence. Self-publishing a la Lulu et al. opens the flood gates a bit too wide for me, and puts too much of the onus for determining quality on the reader. For experts, that is no big deal, but for students, not a good idea.

Good point about copyright agreements. Authors should never assign their copyright to any firm or publisher. It's a noxious tactic by publishers, who know exactly why they are doing it.

8.

Stephen Roberts [permalink](#)
November 20, 2010 23:36

I'd be interested to read any thoughts you have on Peter Lang, Dale.



Dale [permalink*](#)

November 22, 2010 18:55

Thanks for asking, Stephen. That would require a bit more research into the current state of Peter Lang on my part. There was a time, about five years ago, where I was up on Peter Lang and the current state of its myriad series. Suffice to say, I am highly skeptical when I see the PL imprint on a book, but tend to take a more nuanced view of their products than with EMP. They publish just enough from highly regarded and established scholars to avoid dismissal, but the fact that they crank out dissertations by the dozens is certainly less than desirable.

My other spontaneous thought on PL is that part of the problem with them is the German (and I believe this is more European than just German) insistence on publication as the last step in the writing of a dissertation. In the US, as you know, scholars submit their manuscripts to their graduate schools, who then submit them to UMI/ProQuest. The publication of "raw" dissertations is discouraged, not that it doesn't happen, and most people at least undertake extensive revisions before a legit publisher will touch it. PL is one of the presses that cranks out (or did last I knew) many of these raw European disses, often in less than entirely transparent ways.

Right now I have myriad other projects, but when I have a chance, perhaps I can collect my thoughts and write something coherent about PL.



9.

Suzanne Sink [permalink](#)
December 3, 2010 15:30

As someone recently offered a contract with EMP, and an otherwise unpublished (outside of journals) new scholar, I was a tad suspicious. It reminded me a bit of the poetry contests at the back of magazines. They publish you – congratulations! Now please buy the book of collected winners for 50 bucks. However, here is my question. Would it be better to have a publication from a questionable publisher for a first book or no book at all? Thanks for any thoughts!



Dale [permalink*](#)
December 7, 2010 09:50

Suzanne – you are right to be suspicious. My spontaneous reaction to your question is that it is better to have no book than a book with a publisher such as EMP. As you can see from these comments, there are scholars favorably disposed to EMP and their like, but there are many more who view such presses with disdain at best. As such, I would not want that publishing credit following me around for the rest of my career.

As a check on this response, I tossed it at my wife, who is tenured faculty in the humanities. Her reply: no book is better. Chop it up into articles before you place it with an EMP, she says.



10.

Andy [permalink](#)
December 31, 2010 00:46

Dear Suzanne,

I published my first book with EMP in early 2010 and I have to admit I regret that decision. Several leading scholars have described the book as an important contribution to my particular

The root problem here is that the number of "good" presses willing to print manuscripts in the humanities—never a large number—is steadily decreasing. Things are only going to get worse, as even well-regarded UPs struggle to survive by clinging for the most part to outdated publishing models. What we need to see is the creation of other publishing opportunities, such as scholar-driven open access monograph imprints that dispense with the complexities of issuing paper and go wholly digital. Those who want paper can simply find their nearest Espresso book machine.

As with journals, academic book publishers claim to do so much work to create the final product, when most of it is actually performed by scholars, primarily the authors. Granted, there is more editorial/proofing work with a book than a journal, but I would argue that this is manageable, and does not require a university press selling books at \$80 a pop. When you consider the overhead of a university press—marketing, all those trips to conferences, the tons and tons of glossy brochures with which they inundate the world—it should be apparent how little of their expenses actually goes to the benefit of scholarship.

11.



Sharon Tan [permalink](#)
January 3, 2011 13:56

I published my first book with EMP. No other publisher would take it, as it was "interdisciplinary" and so did not fit on their lists. Since then it has been well reviewed, and while EMP is not a UP, it is acceptable enough for my tenure portfolio. My main concern is its price. But these are all considerations a junior scholar has to take into account.



Dale [permalink](#)
January 3, 2011 14:01

I completely understand, Sharon, and I hope this discussion underscores that my criticisms are directed at Mellen and the libraries who buy their titles, not at EMP authors, who are often faced with rock/hard place decisions that have significant impact on their lives. If you need a book for tenure, anything short of a felony is OK by me.

12.



David Fahey [permalink](#)
January 4, 2011 08:21

Dale's criticism of Edwin Mellen Press is that their books are too expensive and that their quality includes too many books that should never have been published. Dale also suggests that the best EMP authors were too impatient or too inflexible to find an alternative publisher. Dale may be a bit too harsh. I published an edited book with Mellen many years ago and a monograph recently. (In the intervening years I have been the author or editor of books published by several university presses and commercial presses, so I have a basis for

A mixture of on demand print publication and on line publication may become mainstream for academic scholarship.



14.

Andrys Onsman [permalink](#)

January 27, 2011 03:22

Dale, as far as I can tell from reading these comments, most authors are reasonably happy with the quality of their books. As to royalties, my first book with them certainly earned some. My second one was awarded a prize and I expect royalties in due course – so I have no complaints. Returns and quality have been no worse or better than other books published with more mainstream publishers. Perhaps as academics we over-estimate the number of copies sold. The comment that EMP books are ignored in the USA is a concern, as it is not case either in Europe, Africa or Australia. In your opinion, is it because EMP has the taint (justified or not) of vanity publishing? The other question I would like you to comment on concerns e-publications and self-publications. What do you think from a librarian's point of view. Best wishes, Andrys. PS – not quite cold enough for an 11 city race this year!

15.

Westbrook [permalink](#)

February 4, 2011 05:49

Thanks for this fascinating discussion. I recently submitted a proposal to Edwin Mellen Press. I had no idea of its reputation but assumed it was good because I'd only heard of it because my PhD viva external examiner – a very eminent scholar in his field – had published a book with it twenty years ago. I was amazed to find that the director wrote back to me within hours of the receiving the proposal offering to 'publish it'. He also asked me to write an essay for him – for which he would pay me. This essay, in HIS area of scholarship, seemed almost completely unrelated to my proposal and possibly indicated that he had not read the proposal, simply the very brief summary in the email body, because he was misunderstanding one of my central terms. I was immediately suspicious, googled the press and found this thread and others like it. I googled him to find he'd been sacked for gross misconduct and I wrote back to him asking where he intended to publish this 'essay.' After over a week, I have heard nothing from him. The whole incident hardly inspired my confidence in this publisher!



Dale [permalink](#)*

February 7, 2011 15:10

Thanks for chiming in with firsthand experience of EMP. This is not how a reputable publisher behaves. Others' experiences, as seen in these comments, have varied, which is worth bearing in mind, but I cannot imagine a university press responding to a manuscript in the fashion you describe here.

But at least theoretically I agree with you that reviews and reception should largely determine the impact and import of scholarship. Practically, however, I must point out that libraries do not buy based on impact and import, because they tend to buy before these have been determined. As such, trust in an imprint is an important factor, and EMP abuses that trust more often than do most publishers, including many of those you mentioned. Given that, and some of the experiences detailed in this comment thread, I remain critical of EMP.

Honestly, this whole discussion is somewhat academic, not to use a pun, but entirely in earnest. Library budgets for books are on life support at best, and there is no hope that that trend will reverse anytime soon. In the not-too-distant future, books of the type published by academic presses will be all but relics, with only those published by a handful of major presses and bundled and sold as ebook packages remaining viable. This is already well underway, as most academic libraries add far more licensed ebooks in a year than they do physical volumes. Needless to say, these skew heavily toward very specific sets of fields, with entire disciplines left out in the cold.

What really matters, of course, is how scholars choose to cope with that by adjusting their communication and reward practices.



18.

Jack Dixon [permalink](#)
February 10, 2011 00:01

Last year I submitted a proposal to Mellen and I received a very eulogistic report on its contribution to scholarship in a handwritten letter from the Editor-in-Chief, Herbert Richardson. It went the rounds and was recommended by two independent assessors.

I soon received a signed and dated publication Agreement.

Richardson didn't like my title. I didn't like his proposed title. However, I signed the Agreement, which bore only his proposed title.

I wrote to Richardson to offer to negotiate. He replied, again in a hand-written letter, unilaterally saying he would not publish my book. In a word, he cancelled what I thought was a legally binding contract signed by two of his fellow-directors.

I wrote again, and again offered to discuss. I was amazed when he wrote back to agree to publish after all.

I forget what the next step was, but again out of the blue came another letter cancelling my contract.

That was the last straw, so far as I was concerned. If he begged on his knees, I would not have any dealings with a man like that. I wonder how anyone with any backbone or principles can work for him.

Your readers might like to look into the academic background of this Richardson. He was sacked by the University of Toronto some years ago. Mind you, there are always several sides to any controversy.



Matti Kamppinen [permalink](#)
February 10, 2011 03:00

Thanks Dale for reply. I agree that the future belongs to electronic books while printed works will be luxury products affordable only by some research libraries.

Jack Dixon had had unconstructive experiences with EMP and it is quite heavy load for any PR. Anyway, I wish to comment on the "sacking" of Herbert Richardson from the University of Toronto. The complicated process of academic mobbing in the case of Richardson is well described and analyzed in the book "The Envy of Excellence – Administrative Mobbing of High-Achieving Professors" (2006) by sociologist Kenneth Westhues. On the basis of this empirical study, Richardson (like many other achievers in the academia) was mobbed out since he disagreed with the paradigm of the faculty, and did not keep his candle under the lid. Westhues' study was published by EMP and/but it has been extremely well received in the research community.

All the best, Matti Kamppinen



Dale [permalink](#)
February 10, 2011 08:24

Thanks for relating your experience with EMP, Jack. At the very least, the comment thread to this post provides documentation of scholars' experiences with EMP.

I read Matti's reply with interest. I knew of Richardson's experience at the U of T in outline, but today I went in search of the reception of Westhues's book. As it turns out, I could only find one scholarly review (by Watson in Academic Questions). On balance, it is a favorable review, but Watson does spend a significant portion of the review outlining what he considers major issues in approach. What strikes me as odd is using one's own press to publish such a title defending one's position.



Matti Kamppinen [permalink](#)
February 10, 2011 13:52

Dale, there is a comprehensive review of that book in the Canadian Journal of Education (vol 27, No 4, 2004), for example. And at Westhues' homepage there is a list of comments by various scholars and references to other reviews in journals.

The use of one's own publishing house is quite natural, I think. (Paul Kurtz, professor of philosophy and the founder of Prometheus Press has published all his books at the Prometheus Press. They are solid, good works on the theme that Prometheus Press profiles in).

In the end, I think it is fair to look at the books published by EMP. For each average study there are several good and excellent books. It's all in the dosage, as they say in toxicology.

All the best, Matti Kamppinen

letter from Richardson, who had intercepted my e-mail, cancelling our contract yet again. I wrote a fairly inflammatory letter to Richardson, and needless to say, I will have no further dealings with that company—all the more since the other directors who submit to that sort of fascism on Richardson's part must be lacking in a modicum of backbone and principle. You might be interested to know further that Richardson once taught theology or religious studies at a Catholic college in the University of Toronto and was fired. The reasons or pretexts were several, but one listed on a website I read was that he tried to convert his students to scientology!! He still calls himself Professor, though he hasn't been a professor for a good many years.



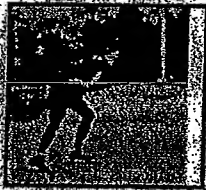
Dale [permalink*](#)

February 11, 2011 16:06

OK, this comment thread is taking a turn for the counterproductive. I think it's time that I closed the comments on this post. I encourage everyone to read more recent posts, including one on Peter Lang.

Comments are closed.

• Who I am



Dale Askey - Librarian normally located in Hamilton, Ontario in an academic library, but often found in Germany.

Bibliothekar, normalerweise in einer wiss. Bibliothek in Kanada auffindbar, aber oft auch in Deutschland vorzufinden.

[My CV / Lebenslauf](#)

• Recent

- [Paying Google](#)
- [Critical online library services?](#)
- [Copyright is never just copyright](#)

• Comments

- [Dale on Paying Google](#)
- [jen weintraub on Paying Google](#)
- [Dale on Paying Google](#)
- [jen weintraub on Paying Google](#)

THE EDWIN MELLEN PRESS LIMITED -and-

ASKEY and McMASTER UNIVERSITY

**ONTARIO
SUPERIOR COURT OF JUSTICE
PROCEEDINGS COMMENCED AT
TORONTO**

STATEMENT OF CLAIM
(Notice of Action issued June 7, 2012)

BORDEN LADNER GERVAIS LLP
Barristers and Solicitors
Scotia Plaza
40 King Street West
Toronto, Ontario
M5H 3Y4

ROBERT B. BELL
Tel: (416) 367-6160
Fax: (416) 361-2757
(LSUC #20145G)

Lawyers for the Plaintiff